

ON MEMBERSHIP: REFLECTIONS OF A SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

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Manitoba Provincial Spiritual Advisor

MY DEAR SISTERS IN THE LEAGUE

I was asked to write why I feel it is important to be a member of The Catholic Women's League of Canada; I was also asked to keep it within 650 words. For those who know me, short is not my usual way. With this as the topic, I will try my best to be concise.

I have had the honour of being involved with or knowing the CWL since I can remember. My mother, Rita Bradbury, has been a member for 53 years and my sister, Kathy Hamilton, is also a member. Both have served on the executive of St. Gabriel Parish Council in Burlington, Ontario. In our childhood, things in the freezer unmarked were fair game; marked "CWL" or "Church," we did not attempt to free these goodies from their place of rest while they awaited a function.

The CWL for me has always been a source of inspiration, women who gather in prayer and live out the wonderful gospel message of Christ. I remember the time and energy put forth by my mother and the other women of our parish. The CWL was and is a central part of parish life throughout the church. When I hear of the works done in the reports given at conventions, I wonder how members could accomplish so much given their already busy lives.

As a young man, a seminarian, a deacon and a priest, I cannot express adequately the importance and gift the CWL has always been for me. While in the north, Bishop Peter Sutton (Keewatin-Le Pas) honoured me when he asked if I would be the diocesan spiritual advisor. I was then asked to be provincial spiritual advisor and continue to have this great honour. I have been blessed to work with such wonderful women who have made my priesthood real. All of you have made me so welcome and provided the opportunity to enjoy a laugh, share a sorrow, and share together the gift of the Eucharist made real in the mass and your daily lives. This is God's gift to me, and I thank God each and every day for all of and for your gift of prayer.

Why should you be a member? You are the grassroots of the church and a voice in both the church and the world for all women of faith, along with their families. The beautiful Virgin Mary, your patroness, gives a wonderful example of both the joy and sorrow of saying "yes" to God's will. You, as individuals and as a whole, have made Christ real in the world. You have done this through who you are and how you live. No cause is too small or too big. You confront the issues head on with faith, love and justice. I am honoured beyond words to be a small part of this wonderful group of women known as The Catholic

Women's League of Canada, and I look forward to many more years together.

In my years with you, I have come to know and make friends from coast to coast to coast. Conventions at all levels are time of great joy where we celebrate God's love in our time together. Through resolutions, group meetings and socializing, you are an amazing sign of God's presence in the world. I find it amazing to watch as we gather from across Canada and realize that we are brought together through the gift of faith, the gift of the CWL.

In my time, I have seen you answer every call to minister to the people of God. Just when I think you are over burdened, you find new strength and somehow answer the call. As a missionary in the north, I watched as you helped Catholic Missions In Canada to do their work through your generous donations and prayers. I had the privilege of having you twin with some of the parishes I served, making a difference and allowing people to come to know Christ through the love of the CWL. My home parish council of St. Gabriel has always been there for me. I ask and they do. What a wonderful gift!

I have had the honour of working hand in hand with many of the members in Manitoba. They are such wonderful women and I have experienced the gift of their love and prayers. I have been with them as they brought forth to the provincial government the concerns of members here and across the country. Their professionalism and determination insures the voice of women and the church is heard.

I know how busy all of you are with families, jobs and parishes, yet you always find the time to promote and spread the gospel message. I am humbled by your witness of faith and I pray that you continue to be strengthened in your zeal for God's work. I cannot thank you enough for the work you do; I can only try to encourage you and beg you to not lose faith so that, through you, our families, parishes, country and world will be a better place. You are a gift from God, and this is why every Catholic woman should be a member of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, the largest and most important voice of women in the church, and the world. You do fantastic work and I thank you on behalf of all followers of Christ. May God continue to bless you and your families as you continue this great mission of faith.

**THANK YOU, IN PRAYER,
FATHER MARTIN BRADBURY**

